

Bessie Ellison Accelerated School

Bessie Ellison Accelerated School, located in St. Joseph, Missouri, is one of 19 K-6 elementary schools in the St. Joseph School District, with a long-standing tradition of high excellence in education. The school is named after Mrs. Bessie Ellison, a former principal and superintendent. The school sits on 12 acres of Missouri cornfields three miles outside the city limits of St. Joseph. The school's enrollment of 288 students serves a unique blend of farm families and city children. The school has a tradition of being "like a family", due in part to its distance from other St. Joseph schools.

The Ellison family embraces the vision that the school is a cooperative partnership of students, parents, staff, and community working together to promote an environment in which all students are nurtured to reach their individual academic, personal, and social potential. All students receive challenging and motivational instruction through research-based best practices that provide growth in basic skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, and technology. Whether it's a kindergarten author sharing her latest writing creation or the 6th grader who avidly discusses the current book from his literature circle, it is obvious that the school cultivates a habit of lifelong learners.

Ellison's success has not come without educational research by the staff. When considering innovative, creative, and effective approaches to teaching and learning, the question foremost asked by teachers is, "How can the quality of teaching and learning be improved in my classroom?" Core teacher groups collaboratively meet in book studies, during cycles with the instructional coach, in cadres and team meetings, and during grade-level planning times to find challenging and more effective methods to inspire children in their classrooms. The teachers believe that they can take charge of their own professional development by understanding curriculum, materials, research, and theories. Professional development is a vital and a most valuable component to Ellison's success.

The 35 staff members of Ellison value their students and are concerned about their ability to achieve the expected outcomes. Because of this on-going desire to give the students the tools and confidence needed for success, activities such as the Mark Twain Children's Book Club, prescriptive tutoring, Computer Club, a Math Achiever's Club, and Spanish Club are in place. Parents work closely with the teachers to ensure student success. American Family Insurance, a valued business partner, and Ellison's PTA generously support the school's vision and mission by providing financial and human resources for the school.

Over the years, Ellison has had low teacher turnover because of the family atmosphere and the high expectations set by the staff. The school has seen two different principals over the past three years due to advancement by the former principal. However, the high expectations for student achievement and providing quality and effective instructional techniques have never been compromised.

Ellison Accelerated School realizes it takes a nurturing learning environment, devoted staff, supportive parents, and an involved community to educate our children. The Ellison staff firmly believes in the mission of the St. Joseph School District, "Educating each child for success".